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Book Notices.

A Commentary on Ezekiel.

The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, with Notes and Introduction. Cambridge Bible Series. By Rev. A. B. Davidson, D. D., LL. D. Cambridge: University Press. 1892. Imported by Macmillan & Co., New York. Pp. lv, 368. Price, \$1.25.

Dr. Davidson seems to be the English scholar to whom the General Editor of the Cambridge Bible Series looks for the most difficult work. His commentary on Job, which appeared in the series some years ago, stands first among all treatises on that profound and perplexing book. So that we feel confidence when the arduous task of a commentary on Ezekiel is taken up by this superior scholar. This prophetic book is full of difficulties, textual and exegetical. The text is in a bad state, and some references have had to be made to that; the readings of the Septuagint have been used where there was deviation from the Hebrew. And after the most faithful effort, "a number of passages in the Text have baffled the ingenuity of the best scholars, and appear to be incurably confused. Other parts of the Book are rendered obscure by allusions not now understood. And, altogether, the student of the Book must take leave of his task with a certain sense of defeat." But one is ready to believe that Dr. Davidson has done all that any one could do to clear up obscurities, settle disputed readings, and get at the facts and thought of the prophecy.

The Introduction of fifty-five pages contains: first, an extended and careful analysis of the book; second, a discussion of "Ezekiel's History and Prophetic Work," in which the circumstances and characteristics of the prophet are admirably presented. He had a mission among the exiles, though his ministry was not confined to them. He was not a writer simply, but the material given in the book has all received an idealizing treatment at his hands. The writing is peculiar for its symbolical figures, symbolical actions, and visions. It is rather doubtful whether the hiding of the girdle (ch. 13) and the walking naked and barefoot (ch. 21) are to be understood as facts. Third, a chapter on "Jehovah, God of Israel," which has been pronounced "the most noteworthy of recent contributions to the theology of the Old Testament." And a fourth, corresponding chapter on "Israel, the People of God;" here he passes quickly over, as irrelevant to his work, the points of contact between Ezekiel and the ritual Law. Warning is given against the drawing of inferences. He was not the author of the Levitical code chs. 17-26, but what his relation to it was is not discussed. Granting a large treatment of this subject would have been out of place in this volume, one is dissatisfied without it, because Dr. Davidson might have given a valuable discussion upon this very live theme of current criticism.

The body of the book is in the regular commentary form of this series. The notes are concise, scholarly, lucid, always interesting and helpful. The literature upon Ezekiel is meagre, as will appear from the works cited on page lv. It is not too much to say that this small volume by Dr. Davidson is altogether

the best work upon the prophecy now to be had. Students are particularly indebted to the author for so laborious and painstaking an exposition of one of the most difficult and popularly unattractive of the Old Testament writings.

The Course of Thought in Acts.

An Introduction to the Study of the Acts of the Apostles. By J. M. Stifler, D. D., Professor of New Testament Exegesis in Crozer Theo. Seminary. Chicago: F. H. Revell Co. 1892. Pp. 287. Price, \$1.25.

This volume is not a commentary; no more commentaries on Acts are needed. But for books such as this there is a real necessity. The author's idea was to take the book of Acts as it exists, and attempt to trace out the course of thought and account logically for all the material presented. It was unfortunate, perhaps, to call it an "Introduction," for that term, as generally understood with reference to Biblical study, contemplates the origin, style and authorship as well as the analysis of the book. Dr. Stifler's sole aim is to get at the writer's purpose and trace its outworking in the material of the Acts. Jesus did not teach the disciples to organize a Church, much less did he organize that Church himself while on earth. That was to be the work of his exalted state, through his disciples. Luke prepared this little history to "show the series of acts by which the Church was formed and brought to its perfection." "The book of Acts naturally falls into a number of concentric sections, like the circles which mark the yearly growth of a tree. Each new one includes all that went before it. These sections mark the successive stages of development in the Church from the beginning to the end." It is with the purpose of carefully tracing out these stages, and thus coming to an understanding of the whole, that Dr. Stifler has prepared this volume.

The material of the Acts is divided logically into twenty sections, and the treatment of each section forms a chapter in the book. The pivotal truths and the pivotal incidents of the history are clearly discerned and emphasized. The perspective and proportion everywhere maintained are admirable. The essential thing in a study of the Acts—namely, to grasp the historical period in its unity, and view the details in their true relations, has been well accomplished. For this reason the work stands alone, and is very useful to all students. The style is good, straightforward and plain. The quantity of points made to the page is large, and there is suggestiveness in the discussion. To get a right, comprehensive and general view of the Acts there is no book so valuable. It may be given the highest recommendation.

It is interesting to note the attitude taken on some of the disputed topics connected with the book. In ch. 1, vs. 18 and 19 are explained as a parenthetical introduction of Luke's own. The tongue-speaking on the Day of Pentecost was an utterance in foreign languages. The community of goods was only transiently binding. The author carefully avoids committing himself as to whether the seven appointed in ch. 6 were the first *deacons*; he calls them "almoners," and hurries over the passage. The conversion of Saul is not discussed. He says that Ananias did not communicate to Saul the information that he was to carry the Lord's name to the Gentiles (cf. 9:15), and that Saul did not learn until some years later of his Gentile mission (cf. 22:17-22). These instances will serve to show the position of the book—critical but conservative, allowing of no confusions between the Acts and the Epistles.